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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General says UNPROFOR presence must be maintained in Bosnia and Herzegovina, citing importance of humanitarian mission; discusses situation with senior officials in Geneva prior to Contact Group meeting on Friday.

* Bosnia and Herzegovina says UNPROFOR framework is at an end, but does not formally withdraw consent to Force's presence; urges international community to lift arms embargo.

* Security Council deplores treatment of Ukrainian peace-keepers in Zepa and Gorazde by Bosnian Government and Serb forces; demands free humanitarian access to Bosnian safe areas.

* UNPROFOR says fall of Zepa appears imminent as Bosnian Serb forces reportedly enter town; Force attempts to negotiate safe passage out of area for civilians.

* Secretary-General has meetings with President of ICRC, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Co-Chairman of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia.

* ICAO predicts world airline passenger traffic will grow by 6 per cent in 1995, and by 7 per cent in 1996 and in 1997.

* Russian Federation tells Human Rights Committee it has nothing to hide from international community; says mechanisms for democracy have been set up despite fall in living standards.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today said that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) must be maintained in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He told correspondents in Geneva that a peace-keeping presence on the ground was a

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prerequisite for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. He made those comments after meeting with senior officials to discuss the political, humanitarian and military dimensions of the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

The Secretary-General said that he had called today's meeting in order to establish a clear position prior to the ministerial meeting of the Contact Group in London on Friday. He expressed the hope that the upcoming meeting would produce new and clear guidelines for dealing with the situation, adding that whatever decision was reached in London would have to be approved by the Security Council.

It was necessary to create a new momentum in favour of the diplomatic and political process, including direct negotiations between the parties, the Secretary-General continued. He noted that there had been no direct contact between the different leaders in the former Yugoslavia for 18 months.

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The UNPROFOR framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at an end, according to Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey. He told correspondents at Headquarters today that the Force was now so flawed and so inadequate to address the situation that it was counter-productive and should come to an end. However, he said that his country had not formally withdrawn its consent to UNPROFOR's presence, and added that he was engaged in constructive dialogue on possible options.

Mr. Sacirbey held out the possibility of bilateral or multilateral arrangements by which States could continue to perform whatever appropriate tasks there might be in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any future arrangement should be without political consideration, such as the arms embargo, and should be consistent with the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It should also take into consideration the practical situation on the ground.

The Foreign Minister strongly criticized the arms embargo, which he described as a quid pro quo for UNPROFOR's presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said his country needed ammunition, helmets, anti-tank weapons and some artillery in order to defend itself. He went on to say that United Nations peace-keepers had shown themselves to be courageous and committed. However, their mission had been a half-measure from the beginning, and had now become a fraction of its former self.

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The Security Council has expressed concern at the harassment and threatening of Ukrainian peace-keepers in Zepa and Gorazde by Bosnian Government and Serb forces. In a statement issued last night, Council President Gerardo

Martinez Blanco (Honduras) stressed that using force against peace-keepers, and using them as hostages and human shields, was illegal and deplorable. He demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the peace-keepers.

The Council also demanded that the Bosnian Serbs cease all attacks against the safe area of Zepa. It expressed concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation in the Bosnian safe areas and demanded free humanitarian access to them to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population, which lacked shelter, food and medical supplies.

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The fall of Zepa appeared to be imminent today after Bosnian Serb forces reportedly entered the town from the west, according to a United Nations spokesman. UNPROFOR was attempting to negotiate safe passage out of Zepa for the population of 17,000 civilians, while Ukrainian peace-keepers abandoned all but one of their observation posts in the area.

UNPROFOR Force Commander Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith met with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to discuss the situation in the eastern enclaves and to protest the seizure by Government forces of weapons and equipment from Ukrainian peace-keepers. The President acknowledged that "uncontrolled elements" of the Bosnian Army were responsible, although the stolen items were not returned.

Meanwhile, fighting continued to intensify on the eastern and western confrontation lines of the Bihac pocket, the spokesman said. Forces loyal to rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic and Serbs in neighbouring Croatia appeared to have launched a coordinated offensive against Bihac.

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Among his appointments in Geneva today, the Secretary-General had a meeting with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga. They discussed the ICRC's humanitarian work throughout the world, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, and cooperation between it and the United Nations.

Yesterday, Mr. Boutros-Ghali met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso. Mr. Ayala Lasso reported to him on his recent trip to African countries, particularly with regard to the situations in Rwanda, Angola and Burundi. The Secretary-General also had a meeting with Co-Chairman Stoltenberg, whom he had recently asked to explore diplomatic avenues which could be used to achieve the objectives identified in Security Council resolution 1,004 (1995).

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Total scheduled passenger traffic on the world's airlines is expected to grow by over 6 per cent in 1995, and by around 7 per cent in 1996 and in 1997, according to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It forecast that total scheduled passenger traffic on ICAO member States' airlines would reach 2,222 billion passenger-kilometres in 1995, 2,372 billion in 1996, and 2,538 billion in 1997.

The ICAO, a United Nations agency, sets international standards and regulations for the safety, security, efficiency and regularity of air transport. It also serves as a medium for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation.

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The Russian Federation has nothing to hide from the international community, according to Russian Justice Minister Valentin Kovalev. He made that comment in Geneva yesterday as he presented his country's report to the Human Rights Committee. He expressed the hope that the report would prompt a professional and frank dialogue with Committee members and provide a basis for assistance with internal problems.

Mr. Kovalev told the Committee that while the dissolution of the Soviet Union had brought about a reduction in standards of living, it had also permitted the establishment of mechanisms for democracy. He said the greatest step in that direction had been the recognition of private rights, as only public laws had existed for the past 70 years.

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